Gay cleric fasts for tolerance

By **Erin Emery**/Gazette Telegraph

A man who wrote for many of the nation's most well-known evangelists, including the Rev. Jerry Falwell, wants you to visit him outside Focus on the Family in northern Colorado Springs.

"Come meet a queer," the Rev. Mel White said on Monday. "But don't bring McDonald's or any fried chicken."

White is fasting for a week — drinking only water and Gatorade — to call attention to "myths" about homosexuality that he says are being perpetrated by James Dobson and Focus on the Family, the conservative Christian group Dobson leads.

"The way he (Dobson) characterizes us sets in motion feelings that we're dangerous, we're disease carriers, we're not good parents," said White. ". . . That makes us out to look like complete villains."

White was once regarded by the religious right as one of its most talented and productive allies — until 1991. That's when he revealed his homosexuality — and when many of his Christian friends shunned him, White said. Before that, White had spent at least $100,000 on Christian counselors who thought he could be "cured."

In a July 4 letter to Dobson, White wrote: "Jim, like the counselors in my tortured past, through your books, your articles and your Focus on the Family broadcasts, you are giving misinformation and false hope that leads gay people like me to long-term suffering, self-loathing and even death."

White told Dobson in the letter that it is simply not true that gays and lesbians are "a threat to American values, that we are not worthy parents, that we are a danger to children, that we should not hold responsible positions in schools and churches, that we abuse and molest, that we are a threat to the military, that we lead godless, sinful lives . . ."

The letter says that Dobson's "cruel and false caricature of gay and lesbian Americans leads to ruined lives, broken families, tragic suicides (especially by gay and lesbian teen-agers) and to growing acts of intolerance, violence and murder against us."

Paul Hetrick, vice president of Focus on the Family, said, "There are myths being put forth about Focus on the Family's position on homosexuality, and he's putting them out."

Hetrick said that blaming Dobson for homosexuals' problems is bogus. The problems, he said, are a byproduct of the lifestyle.

"He's indicting Dr. Dobson for complicity to murder," Hetrick said.

Hetrick said White's appearance in Colorado Springs may be nothing more than a stunt to promote his book, "Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America."

Focus' policy on homosexuality "calls all Christians to sincerely love and understand those involved in the homosexual life, remembering that Jesus demonstrated far greater compassion for people caught up in sexual immorality than for religious hypocrites."

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CITY

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a year earlier.

Anytime the city collects more money that what's allowed under tax-limitation controls, it must get voter approval to spend the surplus. Otherwise, the money goes back to taxpayers.

Last year the city refunded about $2 million by giving each customer of the Colorado Springs Electric De-

improvements — roadwork, drainage projects and the like — and wants the $2.5 million for the work.

"It's in the amendment, isn't it?" Mayor Robert Isaac said of the city's option to seek permission to spend the money. "If those are needed projects, then it's worth considering."

Councilman John Hazlehurst said the city should draw up a list of specific projects. That way, voters will know where the money's going, increasing the chances they'll give their OK.

Councilwoman Cheryl Gillaspie was the lone opponent. She said the

HOW THEY VOTED

To give preliminary approval to a Nov. 8 ballot proposal that asks voters for permission to spend $2.5 million in excess tax revenue.

YES: Jack Forrest, John Hazlehurst, Mayor Robert Isaac, Mary Lou Makepeace, Randy Purvis and Vice Mayor Leon Young.

NO: Cheryl Gillaspie.

ABSENT: Lisa Are Cook, Bill Guman.